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TAGS: [CASC](#) [IS](#) [KWBG](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#)
SUBJECT: A/S BURNS' JANUARY 24 MEETING WITH MFA DG
ABRAMOVICH

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RICHARD H. JONES, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Israeli MFA Director General Aharon Abramovitch updated U/S Burns January 24 on recent meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams, noting that despite the previous day's incidents on the Egypt-Gaza border, the teams met that day. Abramovitch expressed the GOI's hope that the U.S. would not support any UNSC presidential statement regarding Gaza. U/S Burns reminded Abramovitch that the UNSC is still waiting for the Israeli report on their use of cluster bombs during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. U/S Burns also raised the matter of problems that Arab and Palestinian Americans encounter at Ben Gurion airport. End summary.

Update on Negotiations on Core Issues

¶12. (C) MFA DG Abramovitch updated U/S Burns on the negotiation of core issues that started ten days earlier. Abramovitch noted that despite the problems the day before in Gaza, Israeli and Palestinian teams met and discussed the core issues. Although the GOI originally envisioned that different negotiation committees would address distinct issues, the teams decided to discuss all issues in one small group. The Israeli team was led by FM Tzipi Livni, and the Palestinian team was led by former Palestinian Authority (PA) PM Ahmed Qurei (Abu Alaa).

¶13. (C) Abramovitch said that the GOI is committed to continuing dialog on the core issues, but cautioned that the Palestinians may not want to continue if the situation in Gaza worsens.

General Fraser's Imminent Arrival

¶14. (C) Ambassador Jones noted that General Fraser arrives on January 26 and said that he expects to spend one week to ten days in Israel each month. U/S Burns stressed that General Fraser is looking forward to proper progress on the Roadmap.

¶15. (C) U/S Burns asked Abramovitch if the GOI had decided on an interlocutor for General Fraser. After suggesting that IDF MGEN Ido Nechushtan might fill the role, Abramovitch later said that the GOI had not yet determined who will be Fraser's counterpart. Ambassador Jones stressed that the U.S. views Fraser's mandate as broader than security and Palestinian compliance with the Roadmap. Abramovitch responded that while he understood the U.S. viewpoint, the GOI prefers to assign someone with a security focus to this role. Abramovitch then asked if the Palestinian interlocutor is known. Ambassador Jones replied that it was not yet known.

UNSC Presidential Statement on Gaza

¶ 6. (C) Abramovitch expressed concern about a UNSC Presidential Statement on the situation in Gaza. Abramovitch said that NEA A/S Welch and State Department Counselor Cohen had informed him the day before of the USG's intent to negotiate the terms of the UNSC Presidential Statement and to bring the context of the Gaza situation into the statement. Abramovitch stated Israel's position that there should be no dialogue on the UNSC Presidential statement, noting that if a statement is released it will be a victory for Hamas and will work against the peace process and against PA President Abbas, who would not be able to speak out against such a statement. Abramovitch stressed the GOI's hope that the U.S. would not support any UNSC Presidential Statement on the matter. U/S Burns said he would check back with Washington about the progress of the statement.

Still Waiting on Israeli Cluster Bomb Report

¶ 7. (C) U/S Burns raised the pending request by General Secretary Ban to receive an Israeli report on cluster

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munitions used by the IDF during the Summer 2006 Second Lebanon War. Noting that Israel promised to deliver the report in October 2007, U/S Burns recommended that the GOI either turn in the data soon, or if they cannot, to note that to the UNSC now. Abramovitch undertook to look into the status of the report. (Note: We subsequently were informed that the report is in the final clearance process and should be provided to UNIFIL and the UNSYG shortly.)

Treatment of AMCIT Arabs and Palestinians at Borders

¶ 8. (C) U/S Burns raised the issue of problems that Arab and Palestinian Americans have encountered when entering and exiting Israel. Offering a current example, A/S Burns mentioned an incident the night before in which a U.S. diplomat with a Muslim surname was held up for more than 30 minutes at Ben Gurion airport while attempting to enter Israel on official business using a U.S. diplomatic passport. Only after the U.S. Embassy urged the MFA to intervene was the diplomat allowed to enter Israel. U/S Burns characterized this kind of treatment of an American diplomat, or any American, as objectionable. U/S Burns also noted problems faced by American citizens traveling to visit or work in the West Bank. He gave Abramovitch a non-paper on the issue and asked that the Israeli government commit itself to more cooperative treatment of American citizens.

¶ 9. (C) Abramovitch asked that the USG distinguish between the problems at the airport and issues involving the West Bank. He apologized for the treatment the diplomat received, explaining that there was a similar name on a computer list of people Israeli security officials want to question. Abramovitch admitted the airport had become a problem, and that not only Americans were affected. Advisor to the DG Ezra said that the MFA is working with airport screeners to resolve this problem. He acknowledged that such problems are adversely affecting Israel's image abroad, and noted that the MFA is currently recommending a USD 25 million project to resolve these problems by upgrading the airport's computer system. Embassy POLCOUNS noted that CA A/S Harty raised the same issue several months earlier during her visit to Israel.

PARTICIPANTS

¶ 10. (U) U.S. Participants:
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns

Ambassador Richard H. Jones.
National Security Council Senior Director Michael Singh
Embassy Political Counselor Marc Sievers
Embassy Notetaker

¶11. (U) Israeli Participants:
MFA DG Aharon Abramovitch
MFA North America Division Director Dan Arbell
Aviv Ezra, Advisor to the MFA DG

¶12. (U) This cable has been cleared by Under Secretary Burns.

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